

declared an end to major combat operations in May of 2003.

We need to face the fact that the situation in Iraq is not improving, nor will it improve as long as our troops remain there. Because the presence of over 160,000 soldiers in Iraq and on Iraqi soil is the main catalyst fueling Iraq's insurgency. The time is long overdue for the U.S. to change course in Iraq and bring our troops home.

To transition from war to peace, we recommend that your administration immediately make four pivotal policy changes in Iraq. First: engage in greater multilateral cooperation with our allies. Second: pursue diplomatic non-military initiatives. Third: prepare for a robust post-conflict reconciliation process. And, fourth: withdraw the U.S. armed Forces. Multilateral cooperation.

The United States must engage the international community, including the U.N. and NATO, to establish a multinational interim security force for Iraq. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations at the United Nations, for example, is well suited for this task.

Diplomatic nonmilitary initiatives. The U.S. must pursue a diplomatic offensive, shifting its role from that of Iraq's military occupier to its reconstruction partner. This means giving Iraq back to the Iraqi people, working with them to rebuild their economic and physical infrastructure and creating Iraqi jobs.

The U.S. must also engage the United Nations to oversee Iraq's economic and humanitarian needs, renounce any desire to control Iraqi oil, and ensure that the United States does not maintain lasting military bases in Iraq.

Post-conflict reconciliation. Establish an international peace commission to oversee Iraq's post-war reconciliations. This group would include members of the global community who have experience in international peace-building and conflict resolution and would be tasked with coordinating peace talks between Iraq's various factions.

Withdrawal of the U.S. Armed Forces. The cost of the war in Iraq, both human and financial, has been staggering. Tragically, the American and Iraqi lives lost and the billions of dollars spent have failed to actually make our country safer from the threat of international terrorism. To end the war in Iraq, save lives, and prevent the U.S. from spiraling even further into debt, the U.S. must withdraw its Armed Forces now.

Mr. President, after Iraq holds its December parliamentary elections, the country's leaders will be responsible for charting Iraq's course. The international community, including the United States, can then provide non-militaristic support to ensure the sufficiency of Iraq.

We look forward to your response to our recommendations, and we would welcome the opportunity to discuss them with you further. Mr. Speaker, I

will send this letter to the President in the coming days. Not only is it long overdue from the Bush administration to end the war in Iraq; it is long overdue for this body, the Congress of America, to do our part in ending the war in Iraq.

I urge all of my colleagues to lend their signatures to this timely, important letter.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURGESS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SCHIFF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. LEWIS of California addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MCCAUL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCCAUL of Texas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HURRICANE WILMA VICTIMS NEED HELP IN SOUTH FLORIDA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, this afternoon all across south Florida, there are thousands of people whose homes have been condemned. They have been condemned following a category 3 hurricane called Hurricane Wilma.

Subsequently in the last few days, it has been pouring rain. I went door to door in my district over the weekend and met hundreds of men and women in their 80s and 90s stuck in their apartments with no power. At one point, I came upon a 93-year-old woman in her kitchen with her 90-year-old next-door neighbor who were looking with despair at an MRE, trying to figure out how to get it open, put it together, and get it heating so that they could have the first hot food, something resembling hot food, that they had had in 5 days.

I literally had to help them with the print on the instructions that was this big, try to figure out how to put that

meal together without burning themselves, because as soon as you put the water in the meal, it starts to immediately heat up.

This was not an isolated incident. In the 2 days after that, those women and the other senior citizens that I represent in the Sunrise Lakes Condominium were told that they needed to leave their apartments because after the rain, the leaking through their condominium roof was so bad that their apartments were uninhabitable.

They are now in an elementary school with no shower, with a make-shift shower that was put together with two porta-potties shoved next to each other and plastic sheeting taped up with a hose stuck over the top so that they could bathe. We are talking about men and women in their upper 80s and 90s.

Hurricane Wilma has caused tremendous suffering in south Florida, and there has not been enough national attention on the plight of my constituents and the constituents of my south Florida colleagues. We need to make sure that we are able to provide the help and assistance that they so desperately need.

There is need across this country, and next week we are going to add insult to injury and apply a manmade disaster in the form of the budget reconciliation, which is Washington-speak for budget cuts. There are going to be proposed housing cuts, Medicare cuts, food stamps, school lunches. Between Katrina and Wilma, and all of the suffering going on across this country, now is not the time to add more harm and do more damage to people who are badly in need.

Mr. Speaker, we need to do right by Americans, not pull the rug out from under them. I urge my colleagues to make sure that we provide the badly needed assistance, both to victims of Hurricane Katrina on the gulf coast and to victims of Katrina from south Florida.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to be back here on the House floor on behalf of the 30-Something Working Group. We have been coming to the floor, Mr. Speaker, now for a couple of years weekly; and over the past several months we have turned it into a nightly, and sometimes bi-nightly, event, where we come down